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period to which it relates; and that in a new edition a few errors in dates and of the press, which now are found in its pages, should be corrected.

4. — *Memoirs of* LIEUT.-GENERAL SCOTT, LL.D., *written by himself.*
In Two Volumes. New York: Sheldon and Company. 1864.
pp. 653.

HORACE seems to pity the forgotten captains who lived before Agamemnon, because they wanted a *vates sacer* fitly to set forth their exploits. But the epithet *sacer* is susceptible of a double meaning, and we suspect that Leonidas would have applied the word in a very different sense to Mr. Glover, if he had ever met him in the Elysian Fields; for so strong a dose of oblivion has seldom been administered to an heroic memory as the twelve books of that gentleman's well-meant epic. After all, however, there are more fatal things even than commonplace poets, and Dr. Bentley was no doubt right in saying that no man could be thoroughly written down but by himself.

It is generally unwise for people to write about themselves, for there is nobody of whom they know so little. George Sand, speaking of Rousseau's Confessions, says very shrewdly that whoever makes himself his hero becomes unconsciously a romance-writer; and Goethe hinted at the same thing when he called his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (which might be paraphrased Fancy and Fact) out of his life. If no man be a hero to his valet, so every man becomes something very like a valet when he dresses himself up for presentation to the world. To be sure, if one has been wooing the world all along, he deserves nothing better than such a theatric apotheosis. The value of memoirs depends very much upon the amount of his memory which the writer devotes to other people. The more a man talks about himself, the less interesting he becomes; and ill-manners in this respect may be as unpleasantly displayed to posterity as to one's own contemporaries. We seem to be justified in forgetting one who is so amply remembered by himself, and almost feel animosity toward a memory which, like a sulky, seems made expressly to convey only a single person. The best memoirs are diaries, in which the events of the day are written down while they are fresh; for then other persons and things have some chance of attention even from the vainest men. But when a vain man, at the close of a long life, writes from recollection, the years, as he looks backward, become a series of mirrors, reflecting only the image of himself in a long perspective of unreal sameness. Had the Duke of St. Simon

written retrospectively, his narrative would have been mainly made up of his jealousies of precedence and other littlenesses, of no consequence even to a parish clerk with the turf once kindly over him; but the photographs of his fatal eyes, whose duplicates he preserved, have given him a precedence beyond the wildest fancy of gentleman-usherhood as the Tacitus of memoir-writers. How men and things looked to John à Nokes a hundred years ago, is worth knowing in proportion to the goodness of his eyes; but how he looked to himself is quite another affair. Gray says that any fool may write a valuable book, if he will only tell what he heard and saw with veracity.

We expected General Scott's autobiography with no little interest. A man whose life covers nearly the whole of our history as a nation, who has been himself an actor in many important events, and who has mingled with the men who have been eminent for the last half-century, must surely have something to tell us well worth hearing. But the book is one of the washiest we ever read. Compared with it, General Heath's memoirs are thrilling, and Ely's journal a thing to cheat us of our pillows. If the General's reputation can stand a watering like this, it must be above proof. A great part of the book reminds one of a collection of certificates to the efficacy of a quack medicine. The General has gathered into it every puff, great and small, that he ever received. Every trifle connected with himself becomes important. He remembers his "tall charger" and his "splendid uniform" (though he is so unkind as not to tell us the name of his tailor); his A. M. at Princeton, which "rounded off the triumphs of the day"; his invitation to visit the Marquis of Tweedale, and to a public dinner in New York. The dressing of a wound becomes a "great effort of science." After the lapse of fifty years, he still remembers with pleasure all that noisy publicity which is the severest penalty of fame.

There are entertaining things in the book, especially the introduction, whose show of learning reminds one of Mr. Jenkinson's Sancio-niathon, Manetho, Berosus, and Ocellus Lucanus. And this again gives a little liveliness even to the index, where we find "Moses and Joshua as autobiographic writers, *introduction*, xi." It is plain that General Scott would change the familiar quotation, and would weigh the merits of Hannibal by *quot libros* he left behind him. There is something very droll in his finding it necessary to quote the examples of Sulla the Dictator and Cato the Censor in favor of writing memoirs; but perhaps something was due to the LL.D. of the title-page.

A single point calls for more serious animadversion. General Scott gives us his views on the slavery question. There is nothing new in them; we have the usual moral mush about being wrong in the abstract

and right in the special case ; but there is a restatement of the old error that emancipation at the South was retarded by anti-slavery agitation at the North, — the simple fact being that slavery renewed its lease of life in the Border States, and especially Virginia, by the rise in the value of slaves, which brought enormous profit to the trader.

General Scott is a truly distinguished man, and his countrymen have never been slow to recognize it. A soldier of tried gallantry, a leader of conspicuous skill, an able organizer, he has been no less successful as a negotiator and healer of differences where courage was to be tempered with prudence. It is a pity that he had not also that reserve which is the complement of a great character. Fame, where it has any substance, may be safely left with those who come after. Even Envy, it has been keenly said, is a lover of the dead ; and one, the great events of whose life are parts of the history of his country, should have been willing to trust his memory to his country's keeping. As it is, we can only hope that she will kindly forget his works in consideration of his deeds.

5. — *The History of Cape Cod.* Vol. I. *The Annals of Barnstable County, including the District of Marshpee.* Vol. II. *The Annals of the Thirteen Towns of Barnstable County.* By FREDERICK FREEMAN. Boston. 1860, 1862. 8vo. pp. 803, 803. Portraits 15, 17.

As regards the writing of New England local history, we are in the last days of grace, and such portions of it as are not very soon committed to the press will be lost forever. The last twenty years have done more toward obliterating traditions than the whole previous century. Until within the lifetime of the present generation, the annals of our towns and villages hardly needed to be put on paper, so minute and vivid were the reminiscences of early days that passed from mouth to mouth and from parent to child, and so numerous were the memorials of the fathers, each of them the nucleus of a circumstantial narrative. History and genealogy formed a large part of the conversation among friends and neighbors. All this is changed now. Old landmarks are passing away, and Young America recognizes no geography but that of the Railroad Guide. With steam-carriage and telegraph, with daily news from the whole world finding its way to every farm-house, and especially with the intense and agonizing excitement incident to our second war of freedom, the past is no longer dwelt upon as it was wont to be, and its living chroniclers look in vain for successors in a generation that is giving itself to the making of fresh history.

Mr. Freeman's History has, therefore, the merit of timeliness. Its